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CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED

AT THE INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. EDMUND H. SEARS,

IN LANCASTER, MASS.,

DECEMBER 23, 1840.

By HENRY WARE, Jr.

PARKMAN PROFESSOR OF PULPIT ELOQUENCE AND THE PASTORAL CARE IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

TOGETHER WITH THE

CHARGE, RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP, AND ADDRESS.

BOSTON:

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SERMON.

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AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH; WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD, THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE.

We have assembled as friends of the Church of Christ, and in his name, to introduce one of his ministers to a new sphere of duty. We have come to kindle another light in this candlestick of the Lord, in the place of that, whose graceful and beneficent beams, for so many years, shed peace and joy on this community. We do it from a sense of the value of our Christian institutions, and with an earnest desire to promote their prosperity. We do it with a recollection of our responsibility to the great Head of the Church, and with devout prayer, that the spirit of truth and grace may attend our assembly and hallow our work.

The relation in which our Saviour stands to the Church may be a suitable topic of discourse. What more suitable, than that this church, on such a day, remember its honored head? What more becoming its Pastor, than that he remember his Teacher and Lord, to whom he must be united as a branch of the vine, if he would bring forth fruit? May the grace of God, then, be with us, as we take up the doctrine of our text, and speak of him "who is the Head of the Body, the Church; who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the preëminence."

The Christian dispensation is part of that great plan for the government of mankind, which began with the birth of the race, and is to lead to the establishment of virtue and happiness throughout the earth. To Christianity has been committed the execution of that comprehensive plan. And as it runs back to the beginning of time, our first inquiry is, What is our Lord's relation to that part of it which preceded his own advent to the world? The answer is easy and simple. As he was to be the chief and most efficient of all God's instruments in the achievement of that great purpose, — as that glorious design was to be consummated by his ministry and institutions, — therefore everything that was done had reference to him, and was made a preparation for his coming and labors. Everything looked forward to him and helped to make ready the way for him. Thus Abraham saw his day and was glad; Moses predicted him; the prophets perpetually referred to his appearing; the Law was but a Schoolmaster to bring to Christ; all was a shadow of good things to come. As everything in the natural year looks forward to the ripening of the harvest, and is arranged with express reference to that crowning season, so everything in the previous interpositions and dispensations was arranged in anticipation of his auspicious advent, who was to close the divine purposes with the full splendor of the spiritual year. The glory of Moses and David, of the Temple and the Altar, would be as incomplete without Christ, as the beautiful blossoming of Spring, and the luxuriant growth of Summer, without the ripe burden of Autumn. All was preparation for him.

The new dispensation, then, having been introduced, what relation does our Lord sustain toward it?

The answer is obviously, in the words of our text, He stands at its head. So he is represented in a great variety of language, and by very various illustrations. Sometimes he is likened to Adam, the first man; — the place which he holds in

the moral history of the race, being correspondent to that which the first man held in the natural history of mankind. Hence he is styled the first-born among brethren, the first-born from the dead; because as in Adam all died, so in Christ are all made alive. Sometimes he is likened to Moses, the head of the Jewish dispensation; as being the Mediator and Lawgiver of the more perfect covenant, in the same sense that Moses was Mediator and Lawgiver of the ancient covenant. Sometimes he is called High priest; he stands at the head of the new worship, as Aaron was the head of the old ritual worship. And sometimes King; king on the throne of his father David; as being appointed to that same authority in the spiritual kingdom, which the monarch of Judah held in the political kingdom. Under all this diversity of representation, the same general idea seems to have been intended, — that Christ is head of the new dispensation in every sense of the term; look at it in what light we may, — and from whatever point of view. And this diversity of phrase and illustration is employed, because *there is no one of them* which could alone adequately express the extent and fulness of the office which he holds.

This remark should have our attention. If duly regarded, it would prevent our following too far the analogy of any one of the titles attributed to the Saviour. Here is an entirely new and singular office assigned to Christ; he holds a place which no other being ever held or will hold; a place superior to all, and in a great variety of ways connected with the fortunes and happiness of mankind. What name shall be given to such an office? In what terms shall it be spoken of? by what titles of honor shall it be described? Human language must be used, because there is no other. But human language can depict the offices of Christ, only by borrowing terms from human offices already existing. It knows no other terms. And as no one office among men comprises or could

comprise all the ideas which belong to his unprecedented position, it was necessary to fill out the meaning by adopting the titles of many. "King" he is not in the strict sense, for he never wore a crown or sat upon a throne; "Priest" he is not literally, for he never stood in robes at the altar or slew the victim in sacrifice; nor "Prophet," simply, but much more than a prophet; nor Lawgiver, Mediator, or Shepherd, in the original and literal sense of those titles; — he was something more than all, above them all, and different from all. But there was something in him which *resembled* the functions or relations of each; something which might be signified by their names; therefore their names were rightfully applied to him. Any one of them alone, would have been totally inadequate; the perfect description could be approximated only by employing them all. We are to remember, then, that neither title precisely expresses the office of the Saviour, and is not to be reasoned from on that presumption. If other more suitable terms had existed, they would have been adopted; and the proper modifications to their customary sense must be learned by a large comparison of them with each other, and with what we learn from other sources of his character and duties.

If this had been duly considered, the world might have been spared much idle and vexatious controversy which has arisen from too literal acceptation of terms, that were never intended to be taken in any but a very qualified sense.

There is, however, one title so exclusively appropriated to our Lord, that it might be supposed to furnish the exact description of his office; the title, namely, of THE MESSIAH. But this, like the rest, only leads the mind back to certain offices amongst men. The Messiah, in its original sense, is "the anointed." Jesus receives that appellation because commissioned and consecrated by God to a holy work, in like manner as the priests and kings had been consecrated by the sacred oil. It indicates the supremacy of this Son of God

above all others who had been anointed; as it is written, "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness *above thy fellows.*" So that the use even of this most distinguishing title points out nothing definite respecting his relations to the new dispensation of grace, excepting his supremacy. He is the Head.

The Head. In what respects? In all. Under God, and by the appointment of God, he is first and supreme in every particular under which that dispensation can be viewed. If it be to reveal divine truth, he is the infallible teacher; if to promulgate the divine will, he is the infallible authority; if to proclaim the divine mercy, he is the one mediator and advocate. What Moses had been to the preceding, Christ became to the new institution, and in relation to the eternal land of promise, what Moses had been in relation to the earthly; — the Leader; — by whose authority, influence, and mediation the whole scheme is conducted. So that precisely as the Law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. As that eminent "servant" of God built up the institutions of the Old Covenant, until they had prepared the way for the New, so the favored "Son" of God built up the institutions of the New Covenant, until they shall have prepared the way for the perfect kingdom beyond the grave.

In making the transition from the partial economy of Judaism to the more universal institution, the several steps of the process demonstrate the supremacy which had been given to Christ. He is to abolish the former and bring in the latter. In accomplishing this, as Daniel represents it, he is to make an end of sacrifices; which he did, according to the book of Hebrews, by the sacrifice of himself; — his devoted death being regarded, emblematically, as the crowning and consummating sacrifice, because from that act the ritual of the Jewish temple ceased and the offerings at the altar were ended. The ancient formalities being removed, he stands

forth as the lawgiver of the new era; publishing with authority the moral and spiritual commandments of God; uttering with wisdom from on high the revelations of his everlasting truth; making proclamation of his infinite grace, and his provisions for the pardon of penitent sinners. Thus by a word of sovereign command he establishes the Kingdom of God among men, and shows himself its rightful Head, in all things having the preëminence.

The frequency and decision with which this is expressed in the Scriptures is very observable. "All power is given unto him in heaven and on earth." "He is exalted to be a Prince and Saviour;" he is "Prince of the kings of the earth." "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Respecting language of this character in the New Testament three remarks are to be made.

1. First, it is to be taken in a spiritual sense as denoting a spiritual power. "My kingdom is not of this world." "The kingdom of God is *within*." It is the authority of truth, the dominion of the soul, the sway of conscience, principle, and holy affections, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Christ has no dominion but a moral dominion. His followers have misunderstood the purpose and contradicted the genius of his empire, when they have seated themselves on thrones, and crowned themselves with diadems, and wielded instruments of force, and struggled for place with the empires of the earth. His kingdom is independent of the governments of the world; it has no lawful partnership with princes or states. It seeks to influence governments, and direct the application of their powers, and reform the administration of the laws, only by a moral operation on the opinions and character of the people. By changing the *minds* of all men

every where, he will finally obtain the control of all the governments of the earth. In that way, — and in no other, — but in that way, incontrovertibly, — in which alone is efficient and impregnable dominion, — he will by and by come to reign as "Prince of the kings of the earth," "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The hearts of all men will be turned to him; and he will sway them, and, through them, the world and its affairs, without rival and supreme.

2. It is next to be remarked, that the dominion assigned to Jesus has been exercised partly by himself in person, and partly by his apostles, and other representatives and servants. While resident on earth, he labored in his own person for the establishment of the kingdom; and since his ascension to heaven, he ever liveth to make intercession. During the early days of the church, it is clear, from the history in the book of Acts, that he maintained a personal superintendence over it; appearing to the apostles, and directing them in their toils. And whatever may be thought the precise meaning of his intercession, there can be no doubt that, as Head of the church and Redeemer of souls, he ever looks with interest on their fortunes here below, and performs in their behalf offices of love and grace. It is mainly, however, through the agency of others that he has been pleased to administer the government of his kingdom and provide for its progress and well being. As the Father sent him, so he sent his apostles, and appointed them "to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In these terms our Lord intimates the manner in which his great trust has been executed; it has been through the agency, in a considerable measure, of the ministers of his church. And we accordingly find, that his institutions have flourished and faded very much in proportion to the fidelity or the negligence of those to whose care they have been committed. The blessing of the Spirit of God, so

essential to the guidance and prosperity of the church, has waited on their prayers and labors.

3. The supremacy, which Christ thus maintains as Head of the spiritual affairs of mankind, is limited to the state of the church upon earth. Its design is accomplished in the deliverance of men from the present evil world, and their preparation for their eternal home. Beyond this life it does not extend. When he has led his many followers to glory, his work is completed, his authority ceases, and the delegated government, entrusted to him for man's sake, comes to an end. This is explicitly taught by the Apostle Paul, when speaking of the resurrection of the last day. "Then," he says, "then cometh the end; when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. * * * And when all things shall be subjected unto him, then will the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." In that higher world, therefore, we shall meet him as our Benefactor, Teacher, Saviour, Redeemer; but no longer our Sovereign and Lord. We shall know and rejoice in his love as that of an elder brother and unchangeable friend; but the authority now resting on him as Head of the spiritual Kingdom will have been restored to the God and Father of all.

We see then, what is the relation which Christ sustains to the dispensation under which we live. He is its anointed Head; ruling it by the authority which God delegated to him, through the institutions he set up and the ministry he sent forth; to the end that holiness might prevail, sin be forgiven and abolished, and man be saved; to surrender his sovereignty at last, that in the perfect state of heaven God may be all in all.

The question now arises, What is the practical bearing of all this? I will endeavor to point it out in four particulars.

1. The relation of Christ to this dispensation as Mediator and Head, is such, as to render him an essential part of it; so that in receiving it, he also must be received and acknowledged at the same time.

Christianity, as a dispensation of religion divinely appointed for man, is constituted partly of certain great truths, and is partly an institution of outward means. It is not merely certain truths concerning the soul and God and human destiny, received from any source and for any reason, which will render a man a Christian. If it were so, then a man might be a Christian who had never heard of Christ; or having heard, yet rejected him; rejected him as a teacher, though assenting to the doctrines which he taught. Christianity does, indeed, embrace those universal truths which may be thus received, and which may have dawned on many minds which Jesus never shone upon; but it embraces much besides. It is an institution, of which he is the Head; and it cannot be received in any adequate and genuine sense, unless he is received with it as its master and founder. He who does not thus receive it, might yet be a religious man, living in ancient Lacedæmon or modern Hindostan, if he lived up to the full light of natural religion; but he certainly could not be called a Christian. Nay, we need not deny that he may be a religious man, living among Christians, in a Christian land — if he bow to God with conscientious submission and reverent worship; but it is not easy to see how he can call himself a Christian. A Christian is a disciple of Christ; but no man is a disciple unless he acknowledge the master. Because a man maintains the unity of God and the doctrine of fate, he is not therefore a Mohammedan; he must acknowledge Mohammed in the character which he claimed. And in order to be a Christian, one must not only maintain certain doctrines, but must acknowledge Christ in the character which he claims. — Christianity is not simply the grand doctrines of a Universal Religion; it is those

doctrines, as they are revealed by God's Son, embodied in his life and made permanent in his institutions, together with all the motives and sanctions which he has added to them, and by which he has urged them on men. In order to discipleship, one must receive the whole. To assume his name on the ground of holding certain truths which he taught, while others which he equally taught are refused, and he himself is rejected as the teacher of them, is an obvious inconsistency.

2. If Christ be Head of the spiritual dispensation which God has set over us, then it follows, that, in all questions of religious truth, we are to be implicitly guided by his word. All that is said by himself and his Apostles respecting the "power that was given to him," "the wisdom of God that was upon him," "the spirit imparted to him without measure," — all implies that he speaks from a divine fulness, with an authority from which there is no appeal. If we admit his claims, we may not go behind his declarations; they are divine and infallible. They are to be received, whether the grounds on which they rest, in the nature of things, can be discerned or not; whether the human reason can or cannot verify them to itself by intuitive discernment or sagacious arguing. They are to be taken as truths because he proclaims them to be such. Now undoubtedly it happens, so consonant is all truth to the human mind, that whatever Christ has taught will in due time be *seen* to be truth by the scrutinizing reason; but I am as much bound to receive it before I thus see it by the light of my own reason as afterwards. My faith in him, as commissioned to declare it to me from the infinite source of knowledge and truth, requires it of me. I exercise faith in him, when I believe in the truth of his doctrine because I trust in him. There is no exercise of faith, if I wait to see it of myself before I will assent to it. — If it should be said, This may not be; because by this reliance on another I may be made to receive what is unreasonable; the answer is, Not at all; for I

am already assured that he is from God, and therefore do not believe it possible that he should teach what is unreasonable. If I withhold my assent to his words, lest I should compromise my reason, I display distrust, not faith; I throw off my allegiance and deny my master; in form I acknowledge, but in fact I reject him. Let me rather implicitly surrender my weak and short-sighted understanding to his wisdom, on whom the Father poured the spirit without measure; satisfied with his assurance that what I know not now I shall know hereafter, and willing to wait though I may not comprehend.

3. If Christ be the Head of the spiritual kingdom, it will follow, that, not only in matters of doctrine addressed to the understanding, but in matters of precept addressed to the conscience and will, his guidance is to be implicitly obeyed. He announces to man his duty. He promulgates the commandment of God. He declares the law of righteousness. There is no course for man but to obey. The commandment of God is perfect right; perfect right is to be pursued without hesitation or deviation; and therefore without hesitation or deviation the precepts of Christ are to be obsèrved. The question is not, are they reasonable; that point has already been decided by the admission, that he is a teacher sent from God. If from God, of course they are reasonable; we can have no so strong proof of anything being reasonable as this, that it is taught by God. Neither is it the question, are they expedient, and is it for our interest to observe them. If we are under the Divine government, these points have already been decided for us by the Sovereign Being in whose hand our destiny lies, and who has sent his Son to be our light. He alone knows what is well for us; we do not know. We may seem, by adhering to his laws of humility, meekness, self-denial, peaceableness, to expose our rights, and put in jeopardy our well being. But this is impossible, so long as they are his laws; and therefore we betray both him and ourselves, when we prefer our own

judgment, and decide *against* those spiritual habits. We show that we have less faith in him than in ourselves; we are false to our profest allegiance to him as the Head of the spiritual kingdom on earth. As subjects of the Divine Government, we have nothing to do with the Divine Law, but to ascertain what it is and obey it. If it is to be ascertained from the teaching of Christ, one might as well proclaim war against the course of nature or the right hand of God, as presume to go contrary to his precepts; it were equally rebellion and folly, and equally sure to end in discomfiture and despair.

4. If thus in all things Christ have the preëminence, and the spiritual interests of the soul are entrusted to him by the Father, then we understand how it is, and why, that the New Testament demands FAITH in his followers. It is by *believing* his revelations, doctrines, and precepts to be from God, and therefore binding, that we receive them. We can receive them only as we believe them. They can be profitable to us, only as we trust in them. If we have not faith in them, they are nothing to us; and their value increases just in proportion to the strength of our belief, that they came from God. Hence the worth and beauty of Faith. Relying with perfect confidence on the word, promises, and sufficiency of Jesus, it enables us to walk through life with the same quiet assurance in regard to our spiritual interests, that we have in regard to the established ordinances of Providence in the natural world. As those ordinances go on, we entrust our temporal concerns to them without fear or misgiving; we understand that they are fixed as the power of God, and wise and kind as his Love. Just such is the effect of Faith, in respect to the concerns of the soul. Throughout our pilgrimage to heaven, in all the trials and progress of our moral being, we lean upon him without fear or misgiving. We look around with a trustful eye, and see that all is well. We look forward with a confiding hope, and our hearts beat with transporting expectation. We know

whom we have believed; that all is secure which we have entrusted to him; and that he has gone to prepare mansions in his Father's house, that where he is we may be also.

And now, Brethren, let us consider how all this may apply to the present occasion.

God has introduced into the world a great dispensation of truth and grace, in order to the perfection and salvation of men. In the midst of it, we are living; and our prospects of real good are bound up in it, for time and for eternity. The Ministry and the Church are the appointed instruments of accomplishing its designs; and we have gathered in the house of God, that we may do something for their continuance and efficiency. Let it be deeply impressed on our minds, that it is the CHRISTIAN Church and the CHRISTIAN Ministry; not an association of men under the exclusive guidance of their own judgment to devise measures for their social and present good; not a teacher of human wisdom, and of truths that his own mind may guess out by ingenious speculation; but the Church, *the Body of Christ*, having no life or worth except as derived from him, its inspiring Head; and the minister, *the servant of Christ*, having no wisdom that can profit, excepting as drawn from his infallible teaching. Over the great work which is to be done for the race God has appointed his Son to be Dictator and Chief; and nothing in aid of it can be effected by the subordinates, excepting in accordance with the methods which he has ordained. How can the institutions of Christianity save the world, but through the doctrines and influences of Christianity? How can the preacher win souls to heaven, but by preaching Christ, who holds the keys of heaven?

We, therefore, ordain to-day a Christian Minister over a Christian Church. We mean that he shall testify here the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. It is through that testimony that he is to hope for success. He is not to be of those who

think that a secular education and the gradual influences of a polite civilization are sufficient for the race; or of those who regard human philosophy as the highest and sanctifying wisdom. What has mere Civilization ever done, but lead to a worldly prosperity, which ends in ruin? What has mere Philosophy ever done, but give a flickering light to a few and leave the multitude in darkness? There are men enough, God knows, to see to it, that society does not degenerate into barbarism; the minister needs not undertake that work. There are men enough to publish the theories of the old and the new philosophies; the minister needs not undertake that. He has a higher calling, he is servant of a loftier truth. The temple throws open its doors to him, that he may go in and make proclamation from God of spiritual and everlasting life alone. Let him stand in his place, and spread that unaltered, unalterable wisdom, which has always blest, and can never fail to bless, and can alone eternally bless, the waiting and immortal soul.

Yes, Brethren; there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. Him hath God highly exalted, and ordained to fulfil the grand purposes of his spiritual Providence. As God is true those purposes will be accomplished. Christ shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. We may reject his teachings, if we will, and refuse to have him rule over us; but we shall not frustrate his glory; we shall only prepare confusion for ourselves in the day when his throne shall be established among the nations. But, if we will be faithful to his word and help his plans, — then, when that day of glory shall arrive, we may be honored of him in presence of his Father, and share the triumphs of his reign.

CHARGE.

BY REV. CALVIN LINCOLN.

My Brother,

Your connexion with this religious society has now been solemnized in conformity with the long established usage in our churches. In prayer to Almighty God you have been publicly designated as the Pastor and spiritual Guide of this people. We have united in imploring the blessing of that Being, whose blessing is the life of the soul, upon the relation on which you have entered, upon the labors which you are called to perform. While we acknowledge the necessity of divine aid to your success in the ministry, we remember that this result depends also on the purity of your purposes, the fidelity and wisdom of your efforts. I am, therefore, instructed by the Representatives of our churches composing this Ecclesiastical Council, to address to you the customary charge—the charge to be faithful as a minister of Jesus Christ. To this voice of admonition and counsel you have already listened: and you cannot have forgotten, or ceased to feel, the power with which it came to your heart on the day of your introduction to the Christian ministry. The same charge you received in the voice of God's truth within, when, in the retirement of your own soul, you resolved to dedicate your powers to the cause of Christ, and the advancement of man's spiritual welfare. And constantly since that day, as you have pondered the instructions, and studied the life of Jesus, the con-

viction has become more and more strong, that it was your best privilege and your highest duty to spend and be spent in the service of your Master, and in the cause of humanity. Why then repeat this service? It is the part of wisdom to take advantage of all circumstances that may minister to the good of the mind. Although you are not to engage in unwonted labors, you are entering a new and larger field of usefulness; and the service to which I am called in connexion with the solemnities of this occasion, may impart new fervor to holy purposes already formed, and give new impression to truths already received.

In the words of the apostle I charge you, — "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. Be thou an example of believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all." With the Epistles, from which these passages are selected, your mind cannot be too familiar. Imbue your heart with the spirit which they breathe; for this spirit will prompt you to strive for high attainments — extensive usefulness — and if need be, to make generous sacrifices to advance the welfare of your flock.

You have entered the ministry, my brother, in an age and in a part of the Christian world, in which the influence that you exert, and the fruit of your labors will depend, mainly, on yourself, on your individual attainments and on your private character. There was a time, if not within your memory or my own, when the office exalted the man, when the station commanded reverence, when the ministerial garb was a sure passport to the confidence of the community, when instructions from the pulpit were heard with reverence, because they were uttered in the sanctuary, and by one who was recognised as

a minister of Christ. This state of things has nearly ceased to exist. Ministers like other men are judged by their works. Faithfulness and ability are the only means by which to secure confidence and respect. This change in public sentiment is not to be lamented. It affords evidence of increasing religious knowledge, and of growing intelligence. It places ministers in a position more true to nature, and altogether more healthful in its action on their own minds and hearts. I do not mean, that the present condition of our churches creates the obligation to be faithful which rests on the minister. This ever existed. But it shows him with the utmost clearness, that he must not trust to his office for the power with which he speaks, but must rely on himself—yes, with the blessing of God, on himself alone. It shows him at once, that the demand is uncompromising, for a devoted heart, an honorable knowledge of his profession, and untiring fidelity in discharging its various and trying duties.

I exhort you then, first of all things, take heed to thyself, and to the ministry which thou hast received, to fulfil it. Reflect, with frequency and seriousness, upon the character of the religion which you are called to preach, upon the design and effect of the services which you are required to perform. Meditate upon the purity and benevolence of Jesus, his entire submission to the will of heaven, his willing sacrifice of himself for the spiritual good of man. You will thus keep alive in your own bosom a spirit of fervent piety towards God, and of ardent love for the people of your charge. Be also an example to your flock; regulate your own temper, conduct, and language, by the same rules which you urge them to obey. Endeavor to appear before your people in the ordinary intercourse of life, in the spirit of your office; not indeed with a forbidding countenance, an unsocial reserve, or a careless indifference to their common interests. Your communion with those around you may be free, your conversation cheerful,

your heart alive to sympathize in all their joys, and you may still be with them as a minister of the religion of Jesus, improving every appropriate season for instruction and exhortation; thus manifesting that the religion which you inculcate, lives in your own heart. A pure life and a holy conversation will give authority to your instructions, and be a pledge of the sincerity with which they are offered.

I urge you again, my brother, to sustain in your own mind a thirst for religious knowledge, a fervent, deep, ever active love of truth. Let its pursuit be a constant purpose of your soul. Open your mind to its reception from whatever source it may be derived. Truth is the natural food of the mind; it imparts clearness to the perceptions, and vigor to the powers. For its own sake, its worth outweighs any toil borne in its acquisition; and in its attainment, the very efforts that we make, impart freshness to the thoughts and sustain the health, the elasticity of the intellect. I offer this suggestion, because we too generally cease from the pursuit of truth as soon as we have entered upon the threshold of that temple in which truth is to be sought and found. With attainments in theological learning, deemed respectable, we enter the ministry. Amid the various cares which demand our attention, we are too much inclined, and too often willing, to rely on attainments already made, to meet the ever changing condition of the moral and religious world. Powers, that are not exerted, lose their energy. The mind, that enters not on new fields of thought, will soon exhaust its early acquisitions. We may produce many newly written sermons, when it would be difficult to show that all of new pertaining to them is not confined to this particular. I am deeply sensible of the difficulties attending the course which I prescribe. Systematic study is often impossible, in connexion with the multiplied labors of the pastor's office. Still, habits of mental activity may be cherished under all circumstances. He, who cannot command

time to read in his study, may think in his walks; and by providence in his arrangements, and economy in the use of time, may unite, with the sound judgment of mature years and the authority of advanced age, the freshness of early impressions, and the full power of a still advancing mind. Examples are not wanting to justify this view. Standing as I do in the presence of this society, I need have no fear in saying, that it is possible for an aged minister thus to render his last years, the brightest, the most useful, and the happiest years of his ministry.

Preach the truth, — the truth as it is in Jesus. Teach not for doctrines the commandments of men. Go for light and knowledge to the authorized messenger of the Divine mind, to him who knew the human heart, its wants and its dangers, and who dwelt in the bosom of the Father. Preach not yourself. Rely not on the deductions of the human mind, or the imaginings of excited feelings. Do not attempt to go above or beyond the written word. When I consider how very slow have been our approaches, in the passage of eighteen centuries, towards a full conception of the spiritual truth unfolded in the preaching and life of Jesus, I have no belief that eighteen centuries to come will render his instructions obsolete or unsuited to the wants of the human soul. Preach the truth with plainness. Form in your own mind a distinct Idea of the object you would secure — of the impression you desire to make. Point out the application of Christian doctrines to the condition, the dangers, and the wants of mankind. Strive to understand the moral and religious state of your own society. By the directness of your manner and the simplicity of your language, let it be manifest to all minds, precisely what you intend — what you regard as essential to their salvation. Shun ambiguous phraseology and an unexplained use of Scripture language. In this manner the truth uttered in one part of a sentence or discourse, is sometimes rendered pointless and powerless, or obscure, by

an adroit arrangement of words and an involved structure of sentences.

Again, I charge you, preach the truth without fear. Deliver to your people the message which in the honesty of your heart you believe has been given you by the great head of the church. Keep back nothing that will be profitable. Let no unworthy timidity ever induce you to refrain from the utterance of that word, which God and duty command you to proclaim. And if it should be, that the worldly-minded complain, or rise in hostility to your course of instruction, still I say, maintain the integrity of your conscience. Any minister, who does not respect himself, will not be respected by his people, even though he flatter their pride and disturb not the quiet of their own hearts. Yes, I repeat, whatever you believe it duty to preach, that proclaim. Maintain the true independence of the pulpit. Let not professed reformers compel you to go beyond, let not the lovers of self-indulgence induce you to fall below, your own convictions. Do not mistake undue self-esteem — a restless love of innovation — a desire to startle your hearers by bold assertions, for Christian fidelity. True independence is calm, discovers itself, not by the frequent declaration of rights, but in a conscientious discharge of duty. The language of defiance usually originates in conscious weakness, and the spirit of defiance will always awaken the spirit of resistance. Speak the truth in love. Show a respect for public sentiment in regard to the time chosen for its utterance; and the truth, if not obeyed, will be heard with respect; if not observed in practice, will be acknowledged in the hearts of your hearers.

The manner of preaching derives great importance from the effect which it gives to the instructions of the preacher. The audience will sympathize in the apparent feelings of their teacher; and it is only by manifesting deep interest yourself, that you can awaken the interest of others. Let your own heart be full of the truths which you would inculcate, and

then let your utterance be fervent and natural. You cannot with safety copy any model. You may with the happiest result, cultivate and improve your own manner, still let it be your own.

Survey, my brother, the whole field of duty which opens before you. The public services of the sabbath, notwithstanding their great importance, do not include all the duties of a Christian pastor. Your time and talents must be freely devoted to the service of your people; and it will be your duty, as I think you will find it a privilege, to be intimately acquainted with them as private friends and in their own families. In this part of your labors let your practice be regulated by principle. Examine the relative claims of different opportunities for usefulness; and in making pastoral visits, be sure to satisfy your own conscience, and then you can bear with composure the complaints of others.

The younger portion of your society will require no inconsiderable share of your attention. With them you have the fairest prospect of usefulness. Go among them as a friend and a brother, and they will gather around you with confidence and love; and while you thus interest their affections, you may lead their thoughts to the great truths of religion, and thus awaken in them a serious regard for their own spiritual improvement. The obligations resting on you as a minister of Christ, are not confined to the people of your immediate charge. You are a member of a great community; and the general interests of truth and godliness have a claim on your regard, and their advancement will demand your coöperation.

Towards Christians, differing from yourself in opinion, ever cherish a spirit of forbearance and love, and manifest the peaceful temper of the Gospel. Never doubt the purity of his motives, whose life is upright, because his creed differs from your own. In this town there are societies of Christians who may perhaps regard your opinions as unfriendly to the inter-

ests of religion. Let your intercourse with them, and their ministers, be marked with candor and forbearance. My brother, we are confident that you will never descend to the mean and wicked practice of entering another man's fold with no higher motive than that of scattering his flock. Never undertake to whisper, when with the members of another communion, suspicions concerning the characters, or religious experience, of their respective pastors. By such management you might possibly withdraw here and there an individual of credulous mind from his former religious connexions; but you could never, knowing that God was your witness, review such a course, but with feelings of the deepest self-abasement.

I have thus endeavored to present for your consideration a brief outline of your more important duties. May you be faithful and successful in their performance; and, when our final judge shall call you to give an account of your stewardship, may you inherit the rewards reserved for those servants who have turned many unto righteousness.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. RUFUS P. STEBBINS.

My Brother,

You have been so long engaged in the work of the ministry, and have had so much experience as a Pastor, that you are deeply impressed with the obligations which rest upon you in the new relations which you sustain to this people. And the Charge which has now been given you by an elder brother cannot but have deepened still more this impression. You feel the responsibility that rests upon you. You are ready to ask, who is sufficient for these things? How natural, then, that you should feel the need of sympathy and fellowship; that you should desire a word of encouragement, of welcome, of hope. It is fitting, then, that under this pressure of responsibility you should be reminded of the promises to the faithful; that you should have a word of sympathy from your brethren; that you should hear the shouts of other reapers in this field of the world; that you should receive some token of their fellowship.

I have been requested, my brother, by this Council, to express to you this sympathy; to give to you the sign of this fellowship; to welcome you among us as a fellow servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Receive, then, this Right Hand as a token of our deep, unfailing sympathy; as a symbol of our cordial and constant Fellowship; as a manifestation of our

joy in meeting you upon this occasion, of our happiness in the prospect of future intercourse with you in the Christian ministry.

I give you this Right Hand, my brother, as a testimonial of our interest in your welfare, as a pledge of our readiness to aid you with our counsels and our prayers. You will not consider it as an unmeaning symbol. It but faintly, it is true, shadows forth the joy, which we feel, that you are to break the bread of life to this people, and to go in and out before them as their teacher, guide, and friend. Welcome then, my Brother, to this field of usefulness,—of labor. You will find here hearts that beat in unison with your own; you will find hands beside those of your ministerial brethren, to aid you in staying up the Ark of the Lord. You are connected with a people whose joy and pride it is to sustain, honorably and constantly, religious institutions. The fickleness which has marked too many other societies has not been permitted to disturb their constancy. They do not feel that they have grown wiser than Christianity, or that the heavenly influences of the teachings of Jesus are all exhausted. They have shown for almost half a century, under the long and faithful ministration of your venerable predecessor, that they understand that they have something to do, as well as their pastor; that if he is to speak the truth in love, and declare the whole counsel of God, they are to listen as those who must give an account,—with forbearance, and charity. They understand that you cannot live by bread alone. Though bountiful to a proverb, you will also find them grateful and kind; and a word of kindness in an hour of trial, a voice of sympathy in a day of depression, how good, my Brother, how good it is! And unless I mistake, they understand that the highest token of the estimation in which they hold your services is not so much *speaking* well of your performances, as *embracing* that religion which you preach, and exhibiting its holiness and beauty in their lives.

We welcome you, then, to this ancient and numerous society, feeling that you will find here a wide sphere of duty, a just appreciation and improvement of your labors. We welcome you to the opportunities you will enjoy of bringing comfort to the sorrowful, consolation to the bereaved, strength to the feeble, guidance to the inquiring. We welcome you to the holy duty of strengthening the faith of the wavering, confirming the hope of the despairing, quickening the purposes of the doubting. We welcome you to the holy pleasure of pointing the penitent to the cross, the faithful to the crown. We welcome you to the lovely office of administering consolation to the broken-hearted, of cheering the strong in their labors; —the dying, in their pains. We welcome you, also, to the joy and high hope of that hour, when you pronounce a blessing upon the newly joined hands and newly pledged hearts of this people. Above all, we welcome you to the devout gratitude which will inspire your heart, when you see souls born into the kingdom of virtue, when the old and the young offer themselves as the followers of the Master at this altar. We do not suppose that you will meet with no trials, suffer no disappointments; but we do suppose that every trial will bring triumph, every disappointment delight. In behalf of this Council, then, and my ministering brethren here present, I welcome you to the joys, the rewards,—the cross, the crown, of a Christian minister.

I have spoken thus far for my brethren; indulge me in one or two remarks for myself. —My Brother and Classmate, our paths have for many years been near together. We have studied the language of Moses and read the divine poetry of Isaiah side by side. We have mused over the glowing lines of the royal singer of Israel, and the words of him who spake as never man spake, in company. We studied together,—let us labor together. With trembling we left the shades of study for the labors of the pulpit and parish. Often did we express

the desire that our lots might be cast together. — They are. Receive once more this Right Hand, often given in friendship, as a token of my personal pleasure in welcoming you to this place and these duties, on this occasion. It will be numbered among the happiest days of my life. Here, my Brother, you can pursue those studies for which you have a taste, and you will find those who will sympathize with you in them. You can bring the result of them here, as an offering, and there will be worshippers who will know that the "oil" has been "beaten." In study and in teaching, in trial and joy, in doubt and hope, you will find many here who will be faithful, constant, true. You have a delightful society,— may your labors be pleasant. You are surrounded with friends,— may you find them always helping you. Long, long may you labor here. Here often may you see the rich fruits of your labors. Here, by this altar, may you welcome many souls to the church; by the altar above may you meet them, the seals of your ministry, the crown of your rejoicing.

But I must close these congratulatory remarks. My heart was full and I could not stay their utterance. My Brother, be faithful unto death, and you will receive a crown of Life.

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

BY REV. CHANDLER ROBBINS.

The service that devolves upon me on this occasion, *My Christian Friends, Members of this Church and Society,* is rendered peculiarly gratifying, no less by a recurrence to the recent history of this Parish, than by a survey of those happy prospects, which fill your hearts with joy and our mouths with congratulation. I should be doing injustice to the demands of truth, and to the general appreciation of your character as a Christian flock, did I not introduce the counsels and suggestions, which you have invited these assembled Churches to offer you, and which they have authorized me to deliver, with the language of commendation. That, amidst the dissensions and divisions, which for the last twenty years have disturbed and dismembered so many of the New England parishes, you have held yourselves peaceably and firmly together; that, even to the latest hour of his services amongst you, you have respectfully attended upon the ministrations and kindly cherished the happiness of one, who, at his decease, was amongst the oldest incumbents of the clerical office in Massachusetts; that, with no one to serve as a common centre of union, you have, since the death of your late venerable Pastor, been cemented together by your personal regard for the interests of religion and your attachment to the Church of your Fathers; and that, after delaying no longer than respect for the dead demanded, you

have with singular promptness and unanimity invited a fit and experienced minister to your altar and your hearts; — these things, my friends, are not to be overlooked by us in this day of regrets to the friends of the faith and order of the Gospel; nor to be mentioned without decent eulogy.

But if these considerations lead us to speak of the past with more than ordinary approval; they at the same time constrain us to indulge respecting the future unwonted expectation. If they evince your knowledge and appreciation of the duties of a Christian people, they furnish stronger reasons for us to look to you, that you prove yourselves in all respects considerate, faithful, and exemplary in that new connexion, which we have consecrated to day. While, then, you are looking to our Brother, whom we have solemnly inducted into his holy office amongst you and over you in the Lord, that he will exert all his powers to prove himself a devoted and successful minister of the New Testament; and whilst you have heard him earnestly charged, that he be instant in season, out of season, in his service to your souls; — we now turn to you, in the presence and in the name of the Great Head of the Church, to remind you of your own responsibilities, and respectfully to admonish you concerning you own obligations.

We feel that the character of this new connexion, the future prosperity of this ancient Church, and the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom in this town and vicinity, depend as much upon yourselves as upon your minister. At least, that he can accomplish comparatively nothing, without your coöperation, devotedness, and love. He may preach with the fervor and closeness of Paul; he may sow the celestial seed with the abounding patience of the Sower, who came forth from heaven; — but, if your ears be dull of hearing, or the soil of your hearts light, stony, or fruitful of thorns, he may wear himself out in vain efforts for your improvement, and reap no other harvest than the consciousness of having done his duty.

It will not be enough, if you liberally provide for his personal comfort and support. It will not be enough, if you welcome him to your firesides with a cordial hospitality, and treat and speak of him with demonstrations of friendship and respect. It will not be enough, if you gratify and encourage him by regular and constant attendance upon his public ministrations — though these things are by no means an unessential part of the duties which you owe to your pastor, and to your faith. There are still weightier obligations than these, which you must conscientiously discharge, in order that he may rejoice and prosper in his office, and the light of God's countenance shine upon this Christian flock. You must stir up the gift of God, that is within yourselves. You must fertilize your hearts by prayer, and charity, and the exercise of godliness. You must seek for yourselves, first of all, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. You must open your souls to the sacred influences of the spirit of holiness and truth and peace. You must place your shoulders to the ark of the covenant. You must devoutly bend before the altar of worship. You must freely come to the table of the Lord, and eagerly reach forth your hands to the cup of blessings. You must unite with him, and with each other, in prayer for himself, and for the church, and for the world. These things, especially, ought you to do, my friends, and not to leave the others undone. And in proportion as you do them, you will be built up in the Lord and prosper — you will increase with the increase of God; and this Church shall be founded upon that Rock, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail.

But, that I may more fully meet the circumstances of this occasion, and discharge my own sense of what is most important to be kept in remembrance by you, in order to the happiness of your intercourse with your new pastor, I must ask you to bear with me whilst I give utterance to those suggestions which assume peculiar prominence in my regard.

If I may give credit to the uniform testimony of all who have had cognizance of the ministry of him, whose venerable image rises up before my mind to day, distinctly and true to the life, as when I saw him a few years ago, standing at my right hand in prayer in this sacred desk — or if we may believe the still surer evidence, that was lately on every side afforded me, as I entered the homes which he has so often cheered and blessed by his benignant smile and his affectionate speech — I must conclude that your lamented minister was preëminently devoted and skilful in the *pastoral duties* of his office. He had known your families intimately and long. He had taken careful note of most of you, from your cradles. He had been familiar with your characters and your manner of life, from your youth up. He had consecrated the union of your fathers and your mothers, and sprinkled the water of baptism upon your own innocent brows. He had been conversant with those privacies of your domestic life, with which the stranger has never intermeddled. He had been consulted in those secret trials, which your hearts have poured out to none other but to God. He had become thoroughly acquainted with your wants, your virtues, and your faults. On these accounts, I am sure you must most deeeply feel his loss. And on these accounts, be assured, you will yet feel it deeply and long. It is impossible that his successor can make it good to you at once. It is impossible that he can enter at once into your feelings and your confidence. He must go in and out amongst you for these many years, before your hearts will of themselves open their doors at his coming, and his own affectionate hand apply the true key to the inmost chambers of your souls. Be not therefore, I pray you, impatient with him, whilst he shall be gradually studying your characters, and slowly winning his way to your confidence and love. Remember that *time* is requisite to ripen an intimacy so delicate and close as that which always ought to subsist be-

tween a faithful pastor and every individual of his flock. Consider that many seasons of converse, and many vicissitudes of life, must always intervene, between the awkwardness and uncertainty of a first introduction, and the sweet and profitable security of a tried and thorough acquaintance. And remember, especially, that the advances to such a desirable condition, must be *mutual* in order to be successful and sure; that giving, as well as receiving, is the condition of confidence and love.

You may take it for granted, that there is nothing which your minister so earnestly desires as to find the way to your hearts. You may depend upon the fact of his yearning to become your bosom friend. You may be assured, that when you hear his knock at your doors, it is a signal, that he wishes to enter the sanctuary of your souls. You may rely, without the possibility of error upon the conviction, that, when he takes his seat at your firesides, it is as a messenger from God, longing to talk with you upon heavenly themes, and burning to convey to you messages of peace and love. And you may know, as surely as if it were inscribed by the finger of God upon his forehead, that you cannot render to him a more precious offering of your kindness and love, than to unbosom to him those deep experiences of your souls, which convey to him tokens of your spiritual estate, and are connected with the eternal world. Compel him not, then, to pine and mourn in secret through a long winter of your coldness and reserve, but let his first walks amongst you be everywhere gladdened with a propitious spring-time of confidence and interest, that your hearts may ere long glow together in a warm summer of perfect love.

One other suggestion, my friends, forces itself to my lips, as I regard the peculiar crisis at which your pastor enters upon his office.

This is the day of innovations and novelties in religion. Topics are forced upon the ministry, which have not heretofore assumed the prominence which they now possess. Many, important, and still uncertain changes are in progress in theological science, in society, and in the church. Great moral questions are coming up for discussion, under circumstances of unprecedented excitement and interest. Dr. Thayer, as I have been often assured, was gifted with a singular prudence, and of a firmness mingled with a suavity, such as is possessed by few. He lived to carry out, consistently and successfully, the wise system of preaching which he began, when a far different order of things influenced the ministerial practice. From the day when it devolved to his occupancy, this pulpit has been sacredly dedicated to those themes, which are without controversy the prominent themes of the Gospel. From the hour when this edifice first echoed to his sonorous voice, its walls have returned no tones but those of peace.

To the principle which guided his conduct in this regard, I know not whether any of his hearers have objected. The great majority, I am sure, have cordially consented to its propriety and soundness. He has gone to his account. He knows, perhaps, ere this, the judgment of Truth upon his preaching.

What course, my Brother may adopt, by what principles he may be guided in selecting his topics for public discourse, we cannot presume to know. But we must all believe that he will regulate himself in this, as in every other function of his office, by a strict and solemn reference to the reckoning of the Great Day. With this assurance, my friends, let me beseech you to be at present content. Grounded in this conviction, leave to him that sense of unrestraint, which will give the freest action to his mind, and the most generous and noble play to the spontaneous emotions of his heart. Let no one venture to control him in regard to the subjects which shall engage

his attention and be commended to the parish from this desk. Let no one expect, that the same exciting theme which is at any time uppermost in his own mind, or in the minds of any little circle of the parishioners, will, or ought to, arouse an equal interest in him. Let him never feel, that his own people will not kindly and patiently hear whatever he is strongly prompted to say. Let him never have reason to fear, that, if he opposes the opinions of any of his hearers, he will forfeit also their affections — if he shakes their prejudices, he will unrivet their attachment — if he chances for once to select an unpopular subject of discourse, his whole life's acceptable sermons will be thrust out of remembrance. If, on one Sabbath, he should make you uneasy, put by your passion at least till another has passed: for, if a week's consideration do not quite dissipate your wrath, God may very likely give him grace to *please* as well as profit you on the next. And remember also, that the *Sermon* is not the only service of the Lord's house; nor the only expression of your minister's mind and heart. The *prayers* also, you ought to consider, and weigh, and feel; and always, I doubt not, the candid listener may find sentiments enough in them to sympathize with and approve, to compensate for the dull or the offensive paragraph that pains or wearies him in the discourse. Listen always to what he has to say, for his own sake, for the truth's sake, for friendship's sake, and for the sake of your own self-discipline. Be swift to hear, slow to judge. Make all the allowance that in a change of situations you would ask and expect for yourselves. Let charity be ever the interpreter of his words; let time be the judge of his opinions; and the fruits of his continued preaching the test of its virtue and truth.

And now, my friends, we leave our Brother to your care; we entrust him to your love; we commend him to your prayers. He is wedded to you in a most solemn connexion. The

divine voice, speaking through your hearts and answering in his, has called him to you and you to him. You have voluntarily plighted your mutual vows; and they are registered in heaven. Christ himself is concerned in the affiance. You have joined your hands in his name; and he has sealed them together. Thus may they long remain; moved as by one mind; warmed as from one heart; working as by one spirit, for the glorious kingdom of God and of his Son.

But indulge me, my friends, yet further, in the utterance of a single emotion of a personal reference, which naturally rises to my lips and lingers for expression, whilst I bear my part in these interesting solemnities. These fields, yon church-yard, this edifice then just completed, and the image that has long been identified with the name of religion amongst you, are enshrined together in my heart amongst the happy and hallowed memories of my early days. Amidst these scenes, and in the company of some who are now amongst the pillars of this church, it was my lot in boyhood to study and to play; and I also have received in this temple, I know not what impressions of wisdom and virtue. It is, therefore, with even a feeling of individual interest, you will believe, that I hope and pray for your future well-being.

Here, in this beautiful vale, where Christian Peace has hitherto found a safe retreat, may the discordant sound of sectarian warfare never be heard. Over the graves of your venerable pastors, who lie down amidst the great congregation of your fathers — as if they would gather their flock about them even in the field of death — may the air never be ruffled by the din of strife amongst their children. May these noble hills, that compass you round about, forever surround an harmonious, devout, and happy community of the friends of God.

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